

I can't please everyone



and I don't want to either

LATA MANGESHKAR, 75 AND IN COMBATIVE MOOD

Did this birthday feel more special than the others?

In my opinion there's nothing special about this birthday. I've only got older. However there was such a huge function planned. People came. It was an event. I'm grateful to everyone who participated. But it was forgotten after two days. With time everything is forgotten.

75 years, a myriad memories—Aap khush hain?

Dekhiye, insaan ki fitrat kuch aisi hai, ki woh kabhi bhi puri tarah se khush nahin hota. Where there's joy there's bound to be sorrow. (laughs) *Kabhi khushi kabhi gham.* Only saints are completely satisfied. I'm a mere mortal. But I can say this with conviction—I'm happy with 90 per cent of my life. I think I've achieved whatever God sent me on earth for. I'm still at it, actually.

Haan. I've been taken for a ride by some people. *Yeh to duniya ki fitrat hai.* Perhaps some people have used me. Maybe others are jealous of me. But then so

many people must be happy for me. Those who wish me well and are happy to see me smile I count as God's blessings. As for the rest, I can't please everyone and I don't want to either. I want to be in the good books of only those who matter to me personally, my family and a few close friends. If I can be of any service to them I'll consider my life well-lived.

You say only 90 per cent of your life pleases you. What's the 10 per cent that makes you unhappy?

When I look back on my life I miss my parents. I wish they were with me today. I also regret the fact that my brother Hridaynath and my sisters didn't get the recognition that I did.

If all the Mangeshkars were as talented as you...

Some of them are, believe me. But because I've been working since childhood and because my stars were favourable I went beyond my siblings. I think I got a thousand times more recognition than I deserved. I never

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considered myself an *afloatoon* (magician).

The strings of everyone's destiny are in God's hands. He gives us so many opportunities to excel in life; it's up to us to make the best of them. If God finds that the opportunities aren't being used properly, He withdraws them. I guess I used my opportunities well. Otherwise, there are so many singers who sing a thousand times better than me.

Like who?

Bade Ghulam Ali Khan *saab*, or my guru Ustad Aamir Khan *saab*... even my own father—these monuments of talent didn't get the recognition they deserved. *Main kya hoon? Kuch bhi nahin hoon!* I look at my life philosophically. I'm grateful to every artiste who has inspired me. They gave me the incentive to move forward.

I don't care what people think of Lata Mangeshkar as a human being. But as a singer, what would I be without the *janta's* support? I'm indebted to my fans everywhere in India, Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan, Europe and the US. What would Lata Mangeshkar be if they didn't love her songs? I'd have come and gone like any other singer.

But to receive so much love, one has to give a lot, doesn't one?

Dekhiye, deta to har koi hai. If I gave one rupee worth of talent, my fans accepted it as Rs 10. Even that one rupee worth of talent has been given to me by God, my parents and my guru. Someone is instrumental in what my throat

MY FAVOURITES

Naming some memorable songs from my career is a tough one. There are so many of them; including some that are not so well-known.

- Shyam Sunder's *Saaajan ki galiyan chod chale*—Bazar (1949) and *Sun lo sajan dil ki baat*—Lahore (1949) and *Bahaar ayee khili kaliyan*—Alif Laila (1952)
- Sajjad Husain's *Aaj mere naseeb ne mujhko rula rula diya*—Hulchul (1951) and *Ae dilruba*—Rustom Sohrab (1963)
- C Ramachandra's *Mohabbat aisi dhadkan hai*—Anarkali (1953)
- As for Shankar-Jaikishen, I like 70 percent of what I sang for them, especially *Yeh sham ki tanhaiya*—Aah (1953), *Meri jaan meri jaan*—Yehudi (1958), *Ajeeb dastaan hai yeh*—Dil Apna Aur Preet Parai (1959), *O mora nadaan balman*—Ujala (1959) and *Ajee roothkar ab kahan jaayeeyega*—Arzoo (1965)
- Naushad Saab's *Jaane wale se mulaqat*—Amar (1954)
- Ravi Shankarji's songs in *Anuradha* (1960)
- Salil Chowdhary's *O sajana barkha bahar*—Parakh (1960) and *Raaton ke saaye ghane*—Annadata (1972)
- Hemant Kumar's *Kahin deep jale kahin dil*—Bees Saal Baad (1962), *O begaraar dil*—Kohra (1964) and *Kuch dil ne kaha*—Anupama (1966)
- SD Burman's *Jogi jab se tu aaya mere dware*—Bandini (1963) and *O mere bairaagi bhanwra*—Ishq Par Zor Nahin (1970)
- Roshanji's lovely songs like *Paaon choo lene do*—Taj Mahal (1963) and all the songs in the film *Chitralekha* (1964)
- Madan Bhaiyya *ke to asankhya gaane hain!* My favourites though are *Woh chup rahe to mere dil ke daag jalte hain* and *Jab jab tumhein bhulaya tum aur yaad aaye*—Jahan Ara (1964)
- Chitraguptji's *Dil ka diya jalaake gaya*—Akash Deep (1965)
- Vasant Desai's *Ghanashyam sundara* (Marathi)
- I love Khayyam's *Baharon mera jeevan bhi samcaron*—Aakhri Khat (1966) and *Ae dil-e-nadaan*—Razia Sultan (1983)
- Laxmikant-Pyarelal's *Woh hain zara khafa khafa*—Shagird (1967), *Chalo sajna jahan tak ghataa chale*—Mere Humdam Mere Dost-1968) and all the songs of *Inteqam* (1969)
- Kalyanji-Anandji's *Akele hain chale aao*—Raaz (1967) and *Chandan sa badan*—Saraswatichandra (1968)
- R D Burman's *Na ja mere humdam*—Pyaar Ka Mausam (1969), *Dilbar dil se pyare*—Caravan (1971) and *Bahon mein chale aao*—Anamika (1973)
- Ghulam Mohamed's songs in *Pakeezah* (1971)
- Ravindra Jain's songs in *Ram Teri Ganga Maili* (1985) and *Henna* (1991)
- Then, my brother Hridaynath Mangeshkar's songs in *Lekin* (1991)
- Vishal Bharadwaj's *Pani pani re*—Maachis (1996)
- I like Anu Malik's *Sandese aate hain* in *Border* (1997) and all the other songs in the film though I haven't sung them. I called him up the moment I heard them.
- Jatin-Lalit's songs in *Jab Pyar Kissi Se Hota Hai* (1998)
- And of course A R Rahman's *Jiya jale*—Dil Se (1998), and *Khamoshiyan gun gunane lage*—One 2 Ka 4 (2001). And though I haven't sung the title song of *Dil Se*, I love that too. In fact, I love all the songs in *Dil Se* and the film too.

oes. Believe me, I'm not being modest. I mean what I say.

Do you think Ashaji's career suffered because of your presence?

Nahin, Asha ko to bahut mila hai. She's a huge singer in her own right. I know what singing in films entails. And Asha knows her stuff extremely well. It's unfortunate if she thinks she could have been more successful outside the Mangeshkar family.

I've never believed she's No. 2 while I'm No. 1. There's no one like Asha in the style that she sings. I think she has been granted as much as I have. I don't know who has planted the idea that she's No. 2 and Lata is No. 1. When Bade Ghulam Ali *saab* and Amir Khan *saab* sang, who was No. 1 and 2? No wonder R D Burman used to compare us with Gary Sobers and Don Bradman. *Donon ke khel mein ek alag style tha.* Likewise with Asha and me.

So, I repeat, Asha got a lot. *Ab yeh baat alag hai ki logon ne mujhe doosre nazariye se dekha.* Neither of us can change that. We're both daughters of the same parents and sometimes I do feel sad that she feels she has been treated unfairly. But I can't do anything about it. I think other members of my family have more reason to complain. Both my siblings Hridaynath and Usha have been working for over three decades. At one point my career had slumped, while Usha had a hit in *Jai Santoshi Maa*. But there has never been any celebration for them. *Yeh baat mujhe zaroor chubhti hai.* What's Asha complaining about? *Woh kyon aisa sochti hai?*

I feel Hridaynath understands music much more than I do. But he hasn't got the recognition he deserved. He has given so much of himself to build our hospital in Pune. And all the credit went to me! Isn't that unfair? *Main ghar mein baithe credit kharaahi hoon.*

Is it tough for you to be who you are?

To the extent that I always have to think before everything I do. I always have to wonder what repercussions my actions will have on my family. It's very essential to be cautious about your conduct if you want to get anywhere in life. *Mujhe akelaapan aaj tak mehsoos nahin hua.* My family has supported me through thick and thin. After my parents' death, I



became the mother of the family. My brother, my sisters are all with me. They all love me.

What about a husband and children?

Never missed them. *Maine apne liye kabhi socha hi nahin.* I've treated my siblings' children as my own.

Agar main shaadi karti to pataa nahin kis type ka aadmi milta. (laughs) We could've fought and I may have been a divorcee today. *Jo hota hai achhe ke liye hota hai.* I feel all the homeless orphaned children of the world are mine.

You've sung for Karisma and Kareena Kapoor. Will

you sing for their kids?

(laughs) *Yeh to paagalpan hai.* I never thought I'd sing for them. But I've stopped thinking about film music now. I've sung for Babita and her two daughters. Kajol and her mother Tanuja and aunt Nutan. One day I came across a song on television that I'd sung for Sulochana, the actress from the silent era.

Why have you stopped singing so frequently?

I've been singing for so many years. The songs that I'm offered now don't inspire me. Even the composers have stopped asking me; they know I'll say no. Some composers keep say-

ing they want me to sing but they never get down to it. I recently sang a duet with Adnan Sami. What now? I don't know. I want to do non-film numbers, health and God permitting.

Whose voices do you like from among the current lot of singers?

Hmmm... Sonu Nigam and Udit Narayan. Udit's an original. Among the female singers, I like Sunidhi Chauhan's voice. She has adapted the American pop style very effectively. Alka Yagnik is good—and very busy. Sadhana Sargam can go very far.

Aapki awaaz hi nahin, aapki saadgi aapki pehchan hai.

The voice is for everyone. My other qualities are only for myself. I'm grateful to all the people who have heard and appreciated me for 61 years. I've no words to express my gratitude to my fans and the film industry that has given me so much.

Subhash K Jha